

society for social responsibility in science

SSRS Newsletter

NO. 67

NOVEMBER 1957

SSRS ANNUAL MEETING IS ADVISED TO FOLLOW METHODS OF GANDHI

The Society for Social Responsibility in Science held its first truly international Annual Meeting September 7 and 8, 1957. The meeting was held on the campus of the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia.

Contributed papers from SSRS members in Germany, India, Korea, New Zealand and Canada were read, mostly in absentia. In addition, the main speaker at the Saturday evening session, astronomer Karel Hujer, a former refugee from Czechoslovakia, presented a vivid picture of the current status of science in that Soviet satellite.

The Society adopted a budget for 1957-8 which allowed \$2050 for operating expenses, of which \$1450 is for the publication and mailing of twelve issues of this Newsletter. A number of other necessary items of business were also transacted by the members of the SSRS. These included creation of a nominating committee, empowering the Council to make the Society into a legal corporation, and work on liaison with other societies whose purposes overlap ours.

PRIYADARANJAN RAY'S PAPER

The most distinguished contributor of a paper was Priyadarajan Ray, former president of the Chemical Society of India. He offered a general philosophical appraisal of present world conditions and our duty toward them, in a paper titled *SSRS and the Moral Crisis in the Modern World*. A brief quotation from the paper follows:

"The pursuit of material power and gain provided by the unrestricted application of science has debased even science itself, and has given a twin

birth of monsters in the form of two power blocs sustained by two different ideological doctrines... Science is being dominated by this conflict. All attempts to overcome this conflict by intellectual devices in the form of United Nations' organization have proved inadequate. Self-interest, national prestige, racial feeling, pride of power and higher standards, ideological differences, mutual fear and other material considerations stand in the way of mutual agreement. In the ultimate analysis it turns out to be a moral issue. There is needed a change of heart, as Gandhi called it. The problem is how to bring about the awakening of a moral sense in order that a third global war with its grim consequences might be averted.

"Fortunately, the solution has already been demonstrated by Gandhi who suggested the adoption of two moral codes of conduct by men. These are the pursuit of truth and the practice of non-violence in thought, word, and deed. This is the only way to bring about a change of heart of both parties in a dispute and thereby to guarantee its peaceful and permanent solution.

"What can we of the SSRS do in propagating these moral codes of conduct? We who have adopted science as our profession proclaim pursuit of truth as the aim and purpose of science. It should be our duty to advocate pursuit of truth in all of our social, political and other relations"

HAROLD LISCHNER ON KOREA.

A complete contrast to Dr. Ray's paper was found in the paper which immediately followed it, *Technical*

Assistance—Some Comments on the Programs in South Korea and an Appeal for the Free-Lance Technical Assistant, by Harold Lischner. (The Korean rehabilitation project operated by Lischner and by Floyd Schmoie, another SSRS member, was described briefly in the February 1956 SSRS Newsletter.)

Lischner's remarks examine his experience and list many reasons why conventional relief projects fail to achieve their objectives. "There has been too much giving of advice and too little understanding on the part of the foreign advisors," he said; "Some programs were handicapped by professional incompetence of the personnel, others by their short-term nature, and others by the imposition of special missionary or political motivations, but the most important handicap in most programs has been the lack of any honest mutual respect and social and intellectual interchange between foreigners and Koreans—a complete isolation of foreign workers from Koreans. In most cases the technical advisors have been more or less imposed upon the people."

Lischner ends with an appeal for more and better workers, and asks the SSRS to figure out how to get them; "The SSRS is asked to consider some of the desirable qualities in a good technical assistant and how best such people might be found and encouraged to participate in technical assistance programs. It is asked further to consider for discussion and possible active support a plan for stimulating and financially supporting employment of technical assistants by indigenous institutions in 'underdeveloped' countries."

CONTRAST IN PAPERS PRESENTED

The above two papers provide a useful illustration of one of the current trends in the SSRS. The public meetings of the Society are now tending to include a program of the reading of contributed papers. But the scope and range of these papers is still very much undecided. What subject matter is appropriate for an SSRS paper? Will we concentrate on speculative and philosophical discussions? Or will we present narrowly factual descriptions of ways in which individuals have managed to do scientific work in accordance with conscience?

No clear trend is apparent. More papers are necessary, and more paper-reading sessions, and more comments by SSRS members on the papers, before our area of study is agreed on. Meanwhile, a variety of papers is welcomed.

Other papers included: a paper submitted from New Zealand by George D.

This Newsletter is published by the Society for Social Responsibility in Science, an organization of scientists and engineers whose purpose, according to its constitution, is "to foster throughout the world a functioning cooperative tradition of personal moral responsibility for the consequences for humanity of professional activity, with emphasis on constructive alternatives to militarism;...to embody in this tradition the principle that the individual must abstain from destructive work and devote himself to constructive work, drawing the line between the two according to his own moral judgment;...to ascertain through open and free discussion the boundary between constructive and destructive work to serve as a guide for individual and group discussion and action..."

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Krouse, titled "Survival Possibilities in a More Radioactive Environment" and an excellent paper titled "A Scientific Alternative to the Arms Race" by Frederick Creedy of Canada. This was the only paper from outside the United States which was presented in person.

There was also a paper sent in from Germany by new SSRS Council Member Gerhard Herz. This paper was both translated and read by Joseph Engelberg.

Mimeographed abstracts of all these papers were distributed at the meeting; some copies are probably still available on request.

The traditional Retiring President's Address was presented at the closing session by William T. Scott. The address bore the title "Science, Social Responsibility and the Self." There is not space to summarize this document now; however, a future issue of this Newsletter may publish excerpts.

Many delegates expressed the view that the 1957 Annual Meeting was the most useful and worthwhile in recent memory.

--T.K.

LEGION VS. SSRS

The American Legion has charged the SSRS with being an international organization with members in 17 countries. It also accuses us of sending this Newsletter to people in 28 different countries. Both accusations are true.

From these facts, the Legion concluded that "There is nothing indigenous to Bucks County or to the United States in the present Society or the proposed corporation."

The American Legion has prepared a series of charges or accusations against the Society for Social Responsibility in Science, on the basis of which the Legion will seek to prevent the SSRS from functioning as a legal corporation. The veterans' group plans to press its opposition to the SSRS through protracted court hearings.

SSRS officers offered to appear and answer questions about the organization, at the Legion meeting where the action was decided; this offer was refused.

The brief giving the case against the SSRS, as the Legion sees it, is an illuminating document. There is not the slightest mention of Communist front suspicions, or any allegations of a connection with the ideology of any nation. On the contrary, the Legion complains that our organization is international, and that our members are not required to pledge allegiance to any one nation.

Basically, the Legion is opposed to the SSRS because of the central principle for which the SSRS was founded, namely, that individuals should make moral decisions about their professional work, refusing such work as would be a violation of conscience.

The Legion feels that the United States, and other countries where there are SSRS members, would be less strong militarily if people did what they considered right instead of obeying their respective governments.

The Legion sees the efforts of SSRS as "pacifism in its broadest sense," and its indictment makes clear that the worst thing about SSRS is that we believe each person should obey his own conscience instead of some external authority. Thus, they attack the SSRS not at its periphery but at its center, and there is little reason to look for a compromise.

Following are some excerpts from the indictment brought by the Legion:

"The corporation is without patriot-

ism to any government and allegiance to any country is not required of its members... Writers for the association or writers of reprints sent out by the association seldom have their nationality mentioned. Its members live in 17 countries and the Newsletter circulated in 28 countries. There is nothing indigenous to Bucks County, to the United States in the present Society or the proposed corporation.

"The corporation is non religious and without a spiritual soul. The conscience of its members need not dictate 'by reason of religious training and belief' but each one may 'what is right in his own eyes.' Most if not all of the past and present officers of the association are conscientious objectors."

"The corporation could:

"1. Recruit scientists and engineers and educate them in pacifism in its broadest sense, encouraging them to refrain from the search or the use of knowledge which, according to the individual's own conscience whether under divine guidance or not, might assist his government in any war effort..."

"2. Give aid, assistance, counsel and legal assistance to those who, because of their beliefs, are refused employment. The subjects of its concern would be conscientious objectors not confined to those defined in Section 456 of the Selective Service Code."

"3. Invade the teaching profession with its members and instill pacifism, internationalism and its beliefs in students in science and engineering."

"4. Aggressively spread its beliefs in other fields of employment, professions and occupations."

OTTO HAHN PLANS

Nobelwinner Otto Hahn has announced that leading atomic research scientists in Germany will meet December 1 to consider what might be done to ward off a nuclear war. The meeting to be held in Bonn, is connected with the April 13 declaration by 18 German scientists who pledged that they would not take part in the production, testing or use of atomic weapons.

Hahn, first scientist to achieve uranium fission, disclosed his plan in an interview reported in the November 8 *New York Times*. Discussing the situation created by United States, Soviet and British possession of hydrogen bombs, he said, "If there were a hot war there would not be much left." Hahn said the present time calls for talks between serious scientists, "rather than political scientists," from the Western nations and from Russia as well.

WHAT THEY SAID

IN BANGKOK--

A meeting of the Pacific Science Congress was held November 18 in Bangkok, Thailand, with 500 scientists from 23 countries present. They were asked to assume moral responsibility for their discoveries and to "accept a high degree of custodianship" over them. The request came from Thai Air Marshal Muni Vejyant Rangsarit, who told the delegates: "An enlightened conscience decrees that we must accept a measure of responsibility for that which we create...Pious words are not all sufficient to stay the approach of wholesale devastation."

--New York Times, Nov. 19, 1957.

RACE TO THE DEATH--

The *Chicago Daily News* published a four-page feature section on the missile race and other aspects of the West competition, with the grim, double-meaning title "U. S. vs. Soviets: A Race to the Death." The final warning-up article was written by philosopher Paul A. Schilpp, who, after viewing with alarm, said:

"Is there, then, no hope? On the one hand we are now traveling, the answer must, frankly, be negative. But we need not continue on that road. If we can remember that all men are brothers and behave accordingly,--if we can find a loyalty higher than that of material gain,--if we can learn to put our trust in moral and spiritual values instead of in weapons of mass destruction,--if we can learn to create rather than destroy...then we may yet be able to save not merely ourselves but all mankind, and become instrumental in freeing men from the unbearable specter of fear and for a life of freedom, justice, equality and love."

--Chicago Daily News, Nov. 16, 1957.

SCHWEITZER REPEATS WARNING--

Dr. Albert L. Schweitzer said in Tokyo interview that "World War III will no longer be a war, it will be the end of mankind." Warning of radioactive fallout, he told a Japanese newswoman: "I speak strictly from the standpoint of a doctor. The radioactivity released from nuclear explosions is already...endangering mankind; if they (the tests) are continued, it is already clear that this danger will become fearful." The main problem, he said, is that the people of the world are still indifferent to warnings on the hazards of nuclear tests.

--Chicago Sun-Times, Sept. 23, 1957.

TOO MUCH RADIATION--

The president of the 3000-member Radiological Society of North America urged that atomic bomb testing be cut to the minimum, that unnecessary X-ray examinations be stopped, and that all avoidable radiation be limited. He warned the Radiological Society members "that it is their social responsibility to see to it that radiation exposure is reduced as far as possible."

--Chicago Sun-Times, Nov. 11, 1957.

MISSILES AND CREMATORIALS--

William Davidon, chairman of the Atomic Scientists of Chicago, denounced those who talk excitedly of the range and power of new missiles without consideration of the dangers they create and the values they destroy. He said: "We might similarly become absorbed in the choice of fuels for the immobile mass crematoriums of twenty years ago, the determination of the 'most effective' number of people to kill in them at a time, or the design of suitable ramps and burners for optimum loading and firing. Willingness and ability to cook others, whether in crematoriums or cities, does not put us in a position of strength from which to champion human rights against oppressors...It makes better copy to give the size of a missile or its radius of destruction than to describe the squashing, boiling, and tearing apart of human beings in the target area..."

--Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, November 1957

"DO NOTHING IF ATOM-BOMBED"--

A noted Australian scientist said Nov. 21 that if a nuclear bomb destroyed New York, the moral thing for the United States to do would be--nothing.

The scientist is Prof. Marcus Oliphant, a prominent nuclear physicist who is director of the Research School in Physical Sciences at Australian National University. He said the Soviet Union could destroy New York with such a bomb either deliberately or by accident. In retaliation, he continued, the United States could destroy Moscow, and so it would go on with the destruction of cities in both countries. He said that nothing could justify the use of nuclear weapons by one nation against another. The situation could be resolved only by thinking in terms of morality, he asserted.

--New York Times, Nov. 22, 1957.

LETTERS

To the Editor of the Newsletter:

I have received a letter from Alex Comfort, a British SSRS member who has been on the Council. He had some stimulating things to say about the things the SSRS should be doing now, and I should like to share some of them with the readers of the Newsletter and get their opinions of his proposals. Here, in part, is what Alex Comfort says:

"I feel that the time has come when we could very usefully consider, not an approach to governments, but a formal approach to our scientific colleagues in military projects, inviting them to resign on ethical grounds. Even if we got few resignations, we might get quite a few people thinking, and I am certain that the state of scientific morale both here and in your country is not so secure but that a little judicious shaking might bring about quite a few defections from unethical and psychopathological projects. I would like to see such a campaign conducted internationally..."

I think it would also be possible to divert the letter-writing and petition-sending public out of the mailboxes of politicians who won't listen and papers which won't print; a few thousand hostile letters arriving on the mat of a research worker who isn't too happy about the ethics of what he is doing might work wonders; my own observations suggest that insulation from public opinion and official flattery, as well as the esprit de corps of a research team, are important factors in making people swallow the policies behind weapons research. I think we should try to do something openly and frankly on these lines."

Herbert Jehle
Lincoln, Neb.

To the Editor of the Newsletter:

Our aims are being questioned by the American Legion, that is, as we express our aims. Might it not be a good idea to have our members tell what they understand in the terms "Social Responsibility in Science"? Also, how they have acted in accordance with their beliefs? It seems to me that we have an opportunity to speak out, and what better way than to have members tell of their feelings and actions?

Norman E. Polster
855 Woods Road
Southampton, Pa.

Gen. Bradley Calls for "Peaceful Accommodation" Rather Than Missile Race

Army General Omar Bradley made a speech November 5 at the convocation of St. Alban's School, Washington, D. C., which will interest SSRS Newsletter readers. The speech went almost unreported in the daily press, yet its ideas are important. We obtained the text from "I. F. Stone's Weekly". --T.K.

By Gen. of the Army Omar N. Bradley

The central problem of our time—as I view it—is how to employ human intelligence for the salvation of mankind. It is a problem we have put upon ourselves. For we have defiled our intellect by the creation of such scientific instruments of destruction that we are now in desperate danger of destroying ourselves. Our plight is critical and with each effort we have made to relieve it by further scientific advance, we have succeeded only in aggravating our peril.

As a result, we are now speeding inexorably toward a day when even the ingenuity of our scientists may be unable to save us from the consequences of a single rash act or a lone reckless hand upon the switch of an uninterceptable missile. For twelve years now we've sought to stave off this ultimate threat of disaster by devising arms which would be both ultimate and disastrous.

An Electronic House of Cards

This irony can probably be compounded a few more years, or perhaps even a few decades. Missiles will bring anti-missiles, and anti-missiles will bring anti-anti-missiles. But inevitably, this whole electronic house of cards will reach a point where it can be constructed no higher.

At that point we shall have come to the peak of this whole incredible dilemma into which the world is shoving itself. And when that time comes there will be little we can do other than to settle down uneasily, smother our fears, and attempt to live in a thickening shadow of death.

Should this situation come to pass, we would have but one single and thin thread to cling to. We call it rationale or reason. We reason that no Government, no single group of men—indeed, not even one willful individual—would be so foolhardy, so reckless, as to precipitate a war which would most surely end in mutual destruction.

Was Hitler Amenable to Reason?

This reasoning may have the benefit of logic. But even logic sometimes goes awry. How can we assume that reason will prevail in a crisis when there is ordinarily so little reason among men. To those who would take comfort in the likelihood of an atomic peace to be secured solely by rationale and reason, I would recall the lapse of reason in a bunker under the Reich Chancellery in Berlin. It failed before, it can fail again.

Have we already gone too far in this search for peace through the accumulation of peril? Is there any way to halt this trend—or must we push on with new devices until we inevitably come to judgment before the atom. I believe there is a way out. And I believe it because I have acquired in my lifetime a decent respect for human intelligence.

It may be that the problems of accommodation in a world split by rival ideologies are more difficult than those with which we have struggled in the construction of ballistics missiles. But I believe, too, that if we apply to these human problems, the energy, creativity, and the perseverance we have devoted to science, even problems of accommodation will yield to reason. Admittedly, the problem of peaceful accommodation in the world is infinitely more difficult than the conquest of space, infinitely more complex than a trip to the moon. But if we will only come to the realization that it must be worked out—whatever it may mean even to such sacred traditions as absolute national sovereignty—I believe that we can somehow, somewhere, and perhaps through some as yet undiscovered world thinker and leader find a workable solution.

The Faith We Need

I confess that this is as much an article of faith as it is an expression of reason. But this, my friends, is what we need, faith in our ability to do what must be done. Without that faith we shall never get started. And until we get started, we shall never know what can be done.

If I am sometimes discouraged, it is not by the magnitude of the problem, but by our colossal indifference to it. I am unable to understand why—if we are willing to trust in reason as a restraint on the use of a ready-made ready-to-fire bomb—we do not make greater, more diligent and more imaginative use of reason and human intelligence in seeking an accord and compromise which will make it possible for mankind to control the atom and banish it as an instrument of war.

This is the real and—indeed—the most strenuous challenge to man's intellect today. By comparison with it, the conquest of space is of small significance. For until we learn how to live together, until we rid ourselves of the strife that mocks our pretensions of civilization, our adventures in science—instead of producing human progress—will continue to crowd it with greater peril.

The Satellite On Which We Live

We can compete with a Sputnik and probably create bigger and better Sputniks of our own. But what are we doing to prevent the Sputnik from evolving into just one more weapons system? And when are we going to muster an intelligence equal to that applied against the Sputnik and dedicate it to the preservation of this Satellite on which we live?

How long—I would ask you—can we put off salvation? When does humanity run out?

If enough of us believe strongly enough in the ability of intelligent human beings to get together on some basis of a just accord, we might somehow, somewhere, in some way and under some auspices make a start on it.

Unless we soon get started, it may be too late.

We can't sit about waiting for some felicitous accident of history that may somehow make the world all right. Time is running against us, and it is running against us with the speed of a Sputnik.

If we're going to save ourselves from the instruments of our own intellect, we had better soon get ourselves under control and begin making the world safe for living.

NOMINATIONS

With the 1957 elections completed, the Nominating Committee has already begun work on the 1958 slate. Mindful of criticisms levelled at a former slate consisting of only one nominee for some posts, the Nominating Committee wants to provide a choice of capable candidates for each position and it needs suggestions and volunteers, especially for Secretary, Treasurer, and Council Member. Norman Polster, Chairman of the Nominating Committee, would like to have your suggestions. Furthermore, if you are willing to carry some responsibility in the SSRS, or to help the organization to perform its chosen tasks, please write to Norman Polster, 8 Woods Road, Southampton, Penna.

EMPLOYMENT

Attractive teaching opportunities in science and engineering at Imperial College of Engineering, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Travel expenses paid. Three year term expected. Details from R. Squires (Dean), Box 385, Addis Ababa, or this Occupation Division.

Assistant Prof. of Physics, Kyoto Women's College, Nagoya, Japan seeks research fellowship in U.S.A. Experience includes study of electron structure of chlorophyll and energy transfer in photosynthesis.

Send replies to Occupation Division, Chairman, M. Jane Oesterling, Woman's Medical College, Philadelphia 29, Pa.

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